

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SALUTE TO CALIFORNIA'S RIO AMERICANO HIGH SCHOOL

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 13, 1996

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with the U.S. Department of Education in saluting Sacramento, California's Rio Americano High School for recently winning recognition as one of our Nation's blue ribbon schools.

I am proud to have such a model institution within my district. For many years, the school's administration, faculty, students, and parents have devoted their collaborative efforts toward the construction of a school and student body which exceeds local, State, and national goals for educating all of its students.

Rio Americano's recognition is well-deserved and its students' phenomenal success underscores the positive results other schools can enjoy by adopting the principles of GOALS 2000: Educate America.

As testament to its success, the school boasts a dropout rate of 0.3 percent and students graduating from Rio Americano are extraordinarily competitive; 94 percent were accepted at the college or university of their choice in 1994.

The proximity to the State capitol provides Rio Americano with a highly motivated, informed community with expectations of excellence in education and the willingness to become partners in the realization of that goal.

Students take an active role in the setting of goals and priorities for the school, as well as discussions which address the implementation of these goals and priorities. This approach fosters the development of sound character, democratic values, ethical judgment, good behavior, and the ability to work in a self-disciplined and purposeful manner. The results are evident in the students' successful roles in a highly active student government, the operation of the school's radio and television stations, the production of the newspaper and yearbook, the planning of rallies and assemblies, the operation of clubs, and the chairing of meetings of student representative groups.

Parents of Rio Americano students logged 8,837 volunteer hours at the school last year alone. They are actively involved in the development of programs, representing the interests of the community, and raising resources which enable the students to participate in enriching experiences within and beyond the classroom. As part of their extensive involvement, parents are responsible for the development and management of several model programs for facilitating the exit of seniors from the schools.

Finally, the school is fortunate to enjoy the outstanding leadership of its principal, Dr. Ronald Uzelac and his dedicated faculty of educators. Together, they have structured the school to take advantage of the strengths of our community, creating and facilitating forums

for staff, students, and parents to work together to examine, debate, and develop programs which draw upon these strengths.

One such program gaining acclaim is Academia Civitas, a political academy which takes advantage of our location in the State capital by establishing a partnership with local political and educational communities. Students follow a specialized curriculum developed by study teams which prepare them to be politically aware citizens able to compete in and contribute to a global society. The academy requires community service, parent involvement, and an internship with one of the many volunteer agencies in our political community.

The State of California has recognized Rio Americano's excellence by honoring the school three times with the Distinguished School Award in 1988 and 1994 and the Sustained Achievement Award in 1990.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to salute the tremendous efforts on the part of Rio Americano High School's administration, faculty, students, and parents. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this model public school and in wishing Rio Americano many years of continued successes.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. BARBARA B. KENNELLY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 13, 1996

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, each February, those of us who serve in Congress have the occasion to rediscover a rich history that has been carefully chronicled by educator and historian, Dr. Carter Woodson, the father of Black History Month. This year, our focus is on African-American women, their past, present, and future.

As a group, these women have made remarkable contributions to this Nation. As individuals, they have enriched lives. Over and over, their stories speak to the strength behind the struggle; to the courage that leads to triumph; to the vision that leads to victory.

This year, our Nation mourned the death of Barbara Jordan, a true champion of the Constitution. She made history from the moment she was elected to Congress as the first African-American from the South to serve since Reconstruction. With her passionate commitment to law, her burning sense of justice, and above all, a voice that spoke truth, she exemplified the spirit of African-American women.

But such heroines are found in all walks of life, and not just in Washington, but in towns and cities across the country. I am proud that Connecticut's First Congressional District is home to so many remarkable African-American women.

Some made their mark with community activism, like the late Isabelle Blake, founder of Connecticut's African-American Day Parade; Ella Cromwell; and Blanche Jackson. Some are outstanding educators, like Dr. Edythe

Gaines of the Connecticut State Board of Education and Eileen Baccus, president of Northwestern Community Technical College.

Some have served in the political world, like Alred Dyce of the Bloomfield Town Council; Carrie Saxon Perry, who broke barriers as the first African-American woman elected to lead a northeastern city; Annette Carter and Marie Lopez Kirkley-Bey, who serve in the State legislature today; and Veronica Airey-Wilson, who serves on the Hartford City Council. There are government professionals, like the city manager of Hartford, Sandra Kee Borges, and the city treasurer, Denise Nappier, and those who sit on the bench, like State Superior Court Judge Curtissa Cofield.

Some inspire us with creativity, like Dollie McLean, founder and executive director of the artist collective. Others take the lead in business, like Kyle Ballou of Fleet Bank. Some we depend on for our news, like Gayle King, WFSB-TV 3 news anchor. And some have sent our spirits soaring—like Nakisha Sales of the 1994–95 NCAA Champion UCONN women's basketball team.

It has been said that history is not what happened, but what is remembered. In this month, we seek to ensure that this precious history and these unique accomplishments are preserved forever.

THE BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL AWARD

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKEY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 13, 1996

Mr. VISCLOSKEY. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise today to commend Wilbur Wright Middle School, and its principal, Mr. Donald Guske, and Munster High School, and its principal, Dr. Kevin McCaffrey, for having been awarded the Blue Ribbon School Award. Both schools are located in Munster, IN.

Blue ribbon schools have been judged to be particularly constructive in meeting local, State, and national goals. These schools also display the qualities of excellence that are necessary to prepare our young people for the challenges of the next century. According to the U.S. Department of Education, which issues this award, blue ribbon school status is awarded to schools that have: strong leadership; a clear vision and sense of mission that is shared by all connected with the school; high quality teaching; challenging up-to-date curricula; policies and practices that ensure a safe environment conducive to learning; a solid commitment to parental involvement; and evidence that the school helps all students achieve a quality education.

State education departments, the Department of Defense Dependent Schools, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Council for American Private Education, review schools in depth to determine which schools meet the high standards of the award. Following the screening process, the nominations are forwarded to the U.S. Department of Education.

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